

# Media Access and Exposure as Determinants of the Political Knowledge of Nigerian Undergraduates

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## ABSTRACT

Media scholars and political scientists alike are concerned about the issue of the impact of the mass media on the political behaviour of the people as consumers of media texts and output. In Nigeria, this curiosity is the same. The few studies that had been conducted along this direction had differing outcomes while most of them focused on the situation with the adult population. This study therefore examined the predictive relationship between media access and exposure on the political knowledge of undergraduates in selected universities in South West Nigeria. Using the descriptive survey design through a carefully constructed questionnaire, data were obtained from respondents selected across the study locale, to measure and test five hypotheses in the study. Findings showed, among other things that exposure to the electronic media predicted higher political knowledge and behaviour among respondents than the print media. Most of the respondents also chose television as the most preferred and dominant medium of political information in the country. Based on the findings it was recommended that Government and media proprietors should collaborate to widen the access of youths to the print media through reduced costs and attractive contents. Because of its increasing popularity among the people, practitioners in the broadcast media were enjoined to adhere to strict professional standards in order to sustain the patronage of the audience while taking advantage of emerging benefits of the Internet for wider reach and more appealing programmes and programming.

## Background to the Study

By his nature as a political animal, man relies on the mass and man-media (interpersonal communication) for information and usable data to enhance his participation and political efficacy in the polity. The media thus exert some forms of influence on politics and the political process. But whether such roles or influence are salutary or not is an on-going debate. However, the reality of media impact as a crucial element among other factors in the human political socialisation process remains undisputable.

Political Socialization is operationalised here as the process through which individuals acquire their particular political orientations, their knowledge, feeling and evaluations regarding their political world (Dawson et al, 1977:33). The mass media play important roles as agents of political socialization in the society. They share this attribute with other institutions like the home, school, the political system and the work environment. The media, as Hjarvard (2008:106) acknowledges, are not simply technologies that organisations, parties or individuals can choose to use – or not to use – as they fit because, “a significant share of the influence media exert arises out of the fact that they have become an integral part of other institutions’ operations, while they also achieved a degree of self-determination and authority that forces other institutions, to greater or lesser degrees, to submit to their logic”. The omnipresence of the media thus appears to have compelled many social institutions, including cultural processes to change or modify their character, function and structure.

As far back as 1959, Robert Lane had posited that, in terms of attitudes and behaviour, the general effect of exposure to the media is a politicizing one. If education is held as a constant factor among a given number of respondents, Lane explained that those who are more exposed to the media are more likely to be “interested in politics, vote, discuss politics, belong to organisations, have more opinions and more political information, have a firm party preference, adopt their party’s views on current issues as well as have strong candidate preferences.”

Almond and Verba in their seminal work on Civic Culture in 1959 identified three basic assumptions of the psycho-cultural approach on political socialization. These include: (1) that the significant socialization experiences that will affect later political behaviour take place quite early in life; (2), that such experiences are not manifestly political experiences, but they have latent political consequences; and (3), that the socialization process is a unidirectional one: the more “basic” family experiences have a significant impact upon the secondary structures of politics but are not in turn affected by them. These assumptions were criticised because the gap between early socialization experiences and politics is seen as too great and complex to be narrowed

down to such simple analyses. It is however noteworthy that the psycho-cultural approach to political socialization established the fact that pre-adult experiences are indeed a potent source of political attitudes. Almond and Verba (op.cit) however confirm that while early socialization experiences significantly affect an individual's basic personality predispositions and may therefore affect his political behaviour, numerous other factors intervene between these earliest experiences and later political behaviour. While not denying the importance of the political system itself as a source of an individual's political attitude, the authors identified some non-political sources of the belief that one has a voice in governmental affairs.

Stroud (2008) investigated whether different media types (newspapers, political talk radio, cable news and Internet) are more likely to inspire selective exposure in the United States. Her findings show that people's political beliefs are related to their media exposure even as respondents' political beliefs and leanings motivate their media use patterns. In his own study in 2009, Shaker affirms that "citizens' media diets must be connected with their political knowledge, given the amount of political information that may (or may not) be consumed via mass media." Shaker however acknowledges that the process through which media use leads to political learning and knowledge is not clear though there is a growing body of literature that seeks to define this relationship. Democracy, as a system of government, is always anchored on the freedom of choice. That is, choice by the people to elect their representatives in government on a tenured or periodic basis. Political theorists are agreed that any meaningful democracy is based on an educated and informed public which acts responsibly on what it knows (Kraus & Davis 1976: 111). For the people to make informed decisions regarding issues that affect their lives, they must rely on information provided by the mass media. This is why scholars like Kogah (2005) insist that political life is almost inconceivable in the modern world without the media.

Literature provides abundant evidence that differential media access among segments of any population leads to differential political participation. Putnam (1995), Norris (1996), Pinkleton, Austin & Fortman (1998), Stroud (2007), Okoye (2008) and Boyle and Schmierbach (2009) are some of the researchers who have found a consistent relation between news media use and forms of political participation. Okoye (2008: 272) specifically asserts that:

Those who use the media more actively also participate in the political and democratic process more actively. Those without access to media often resort to violent and other anti-social and anti-democratic behaviours, out of ignorance or frustration, or both. Others resort to complacency and/or resignation, of what the late Bola Ige famously referred to as "siddon look."

Researchers examining media effects on political attitudes have produced conflicting results and explanations. For instance, scholars like Robinson (1976), Robinson and Sheehan (1983), Patterson (1980, 1993), Iyengar (1994), Putnam (1995), Hallin (1997), and Capella and Jamieson (1997) conclude their studies along the thematic position that media use diminishes political knowledge and involvement and contributes to political cynicism and declining turnout. Others like Inglehart (1990), Dalton (1996), Norris (1996, 2000), Brehm and Rahn (1997) and Ladd (1999) believe that media use contribute to learning, political involvement, trust, efficacy and mobilisation.

Reviewing these seemingly contradictory positions, Aarts and Semetko (2003) in a study conducted on the situation in Netherland discover what could be regarded as a middle-point position or resolution. Against the backdrop of the Dutch democracy, the scholars report:

Viewing behaviour separates the more knowledgeable, the efficacious, and the politically involved from those who are not, revealing what might be described as a "virtuous circle" for some and a "spiral of cynicism" for others.

Explaining further the direction and context of their findings, Aarts and Semetko (2003: 774), comment:

Our findings suggest that the virtuous circle described by Norris (2000) may only exist in a European context for those who rely largely on public television for their news, and this number has diminished as competition for audiences increases. At the same time, commercial news viewing in Netherlands and probably in a number other European countries, if not ultimately contributing to what Capella and Jamieson (1997) have dubbed a spiral of cynicism, then at least is contributing to diminishing political involvement.

The polemics continue in the typical "which-one-comes-first-the chicken or the egg- fashion. But be that as it may, many scholars agree that an active citizenry is central to the issue and well-being of a participatory

democracy. It is against this backdrop that an attempt is made in this study to examine the impact of media access and exposure on the political knowledge of undergraduates in selected Universities in South-West Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study finds anchorage on the principles and postulations of the Uses and Gratifications theory. The Uses and Gratifications theory evolved out of the attempt to explain an individual's media consumption behaviour. As a theory in the Behaviourist's School of thought, Uses and Gratifications tries to predict an individual's media usage patterns according to the human needs that they satisfy.

The theory is based on the assumption of an active audience who seek out media that meet their needs for knowledge, social interaction and diversion (Straubhaar & LaRose, 2002: 59). Behavioural theorists believe that all human actions and reactions, including knowledge and attitudinal changes, are in some way, directed toward the satisfaction of specific wants or needs. In other words, every human action or inaction is seen as a response to some conscious or subconscious requirement or purpose.

The media are generally acknowledged as the oxygen of democratic governance. The media play a crucial role as the public sphere where communicative actions are taken to determine the directions of public discourse (Habermas, 1989). Democracy thrives in the cross-fertilisation of ideas and the media provide the needed platform, the market place of ideas for the nurturing of democratic norms and ideals.

Lasswell (1948: 37-51) itemises a three-functional interpretation of the media on a macro-sociological level. These include the functions of surveillance, correlation, and the transmission of cultural heritage both at individual and societal levels. Wright, 1959: 16) adds the entertainment function. Blumler and Brown (1972) reclassify the four primary functions of media use to include:

- (i) Diversion — escape from routine and problems; an emotional release.
- (ii) Personal Relationships — social utility of information in conversation; substitution of media for companionship.
- (iii) Personal Identity or Individual Psychology — value reinforcement or reassurance; self-understanding, reality exploration.
- (iv) Surveillance — information about factors which might affect one or will help one do or accomplish something.

Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) see the mass media as a means by which individuals connect or disconnect themselves with others. They compiled a list of 35 needs from literature on the social and psychological functions of the mass media and compressed them into five groups. These are:

- (i) Cognitive needs — acquiring information, knowledge and understanding.
- (ii) Affective needs — emotion, pleasure, feelings.
- (iii) Personal integrative needs — credibility, stability status.
- (iv) Social Integrative needs — family, friends.
- (v) Tension release needs — Escape and diversion.

(Severin & Tankard: 1997)

Proponents of Uses and Gratifications theory bring these analyses to bear in their interpretation of the circumstances and context of an individual's political behaviour. Aririguzor (2010: 44), citing Cook (1998), opines that politics and the media feed off each other. She explains that the mass media operate as institutions in the political industry as well as act as sources of influence on the electorate that decide what happens in the political sphere.

The concept of political behaviour incorporates other sundry terms such as political interest, knowledge, participation or voting patterns. Newton and Brynin (2001) explain that a people's media consumption is closely linked to a range of social, economic and political variables that are themselves, associated with political attitudes and behaviour. According to Newton & Brynin, Education, for example, is closely related to patterns of media consumption, on the one hand, and political attitudes and voting behaviour, on the other, making it exceedingly difficult to disentangle the separate media and education effects.

Studies have shown that a person's educational background influences his or her media exposure and consequently, the political behaviour. Citing an earlier study, Kazee (1981: 508) asserts that "the less an individual cares about, is interested in, and/or views as central to his personal well-being, the holding of a particular attitude, the more easily he may be persuaded to change that attitude and its attendant behavioural tendencies."

In a study conducted to determine the influence of the National Press on Party Voting in the United Kingdom, Newton and Brynin try to justify the validity of the minimal media effects/influence school of thought of which the Uses and Gratifications belongs when they submit that:

It is more probable that readers select the paper that fits their political inclinations, and that papers reflect rather than create voting behaviour ... newspapers reinforce the basic political inclinations of their readers, rather than moulding them or shaping them. (Newton & Brynin, 2001: 267)

In all, the basic proposition in Uses and Gratifications theory is the fact that an individual's choice or exposure to any given media depends on the type of satisfaction derived from such chance or exposure.

### **Methodology**

The study focused on undergraduates in six (6) universities in South West Nigeria. These included two state government-owned viz: Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye and Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos; two privately owned universities viz: Covenant University, Ota and Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo and two federal government owned universities – University of Lagos and University of Ibadan. This classification captures the institutional configuration of university education in Nigeria. It is assumed that by their nature and admission policies, these institutions host a cross-section of students across the diverse ethnic religious and geographical zones of the country.

The samples for this study were drawn from the total estimates of the students' population. Five percent that is 4,700 of respondents' population of 94,000 were drawn at each instance proportionately with the following details. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to generate a comprehensive sampling frame of the respondents. To this effect, universities in the South Western Nigeria were first stratified into Federal, State and Private in terms of ownership. Two universities were purposively selected from each stratum.

After this the Faculties, Schools, Colleges or Departments in each of the selected universities formed a cluster. From each cluster of faculties in each selected university, two faculties were selected by simple random sampling utilizing the ballot method. From the selected school or college, two departments were randomly picked.

Finally, using the list of registered students as a sampling frame in each selected department, systematic random sampling technique was used to select students who were the respondents in the study. The number of respondents selected from each department was allocated proportionately to the total number of registered students in each department so selected.

### **Research Instrument**

The principal instrument for collecting data for this study was a 27-item questionnaire tagged Media Use and Political Behaviour Survey (MUPBS). The questionnaire was divided into four basic segments. The first segment/section elicited information on the socio-demographic background of respondents. Other segments included Media Access and Exposure, Political Knowledge, Interest and Behaviour. The questionnaires were administered on respondents during class time.

Data on the dependent variables consisted of indexes for each of the political knowledge, interest and behaviour factors. Political knowledge comprised an index of seven multiple-choice items (with four choices each)

representing information regularly covered by all mass media agencies. This section was further sub-divided into two categories comprising basic knowledge and current knowledge.

Political Interest index was measured by asking respondents how interested and active they were in domestic politics. Data on this was got through a five-point Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Undecided”. To measure respondents’ Political Behaviour, question items ranged from political participation and discussion to voting in elections including taking part in demonstration and interpersonal communication on political issues or affairs.

Mass media variables were tested through simple exposure and this covered various aspects such as: exposure to newspapers/magazines measured by the number of minutes a respondent reads a newspaper/magazine each day on the average. Exposure to television was measured by number of hours spent viewing television each day. The same was done for radio and the Internet.

The political content use of the various media were determined by the frequency which respondents read, watched, listened to or were exposed to politically-related stories or articles (such as front page, political page and editorials) or watched politically related programmes on television (such as national news, special news programmes and news commentaries).

In addition to these, the degree of reliance of each of the media under study was determined through the questionnaire, by respondents’ indication of their primary source for political information from the different media in their order of relevance and primacy. Consequently, 4,228 copies of the questionnaire duly filled and returned by respondents were analysed making a return rate of 90%.

## Findings

### Research Hypothesis One

H<sub>01</sub>: Exposure to newspapers will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media.

Tables 1: Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Access to Newspaper on Political Knowledge

Newspaper	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error Mean Difference	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	2946	2.6931	1.67966	.03095	.26491	4226	4.723	.000
No	1282	2.4282	1.66844	.04660				

The results in Table 1 showed that there was a significant influence of access to Newspaper on respondents’ political knowledge ( $t_{4226} = 4.723$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Respondents who had access to Newspapers had greater political knowledge than those without access to Newspaper. The hypothesis which postulated that exposure to newspapers will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media was by this finding rejected.

Tables 2: Descriptive Statistics of the influence of the Frequency of Access to Newspaper on Knowledge of Political Issues

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean				Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound				
Everyday	979	2.9305	1.68333	.05380	2.8250	3.0361			.00	7.00
Thrice a week	515	2.8078	1.65036	.07272	2.6649	2.9506			.00	7.00
Twice a week	446	2.7982	1.84198	.08722	2.6268	2.9696			.00	7.00
Once a week	644	2.6506	1.72368	.06792	2.5172	2.7840			.00	7.00
Rarely	1644	2.2974	1.56956	.03871	2.2215	2.3734			.00	7.00
Total	4228	2.6128	1.68049	.02584	2.5622	2.6635			.00	7.00

The results in Table 2 revealed that the 979 respondents who had access to Newspapers everyday had a mean score of 2.9305 and standard error of 1.68333. The 515 respondents who had access to Newspapers twice a week had a mean score of 2.8078 and standard error of 1.65036. Whereas the 446 respondents who had access to

Newspapers thrice a week had a mean score of 2.7982 and standard error of 1.84198, those 644 respondents who had access to Newspapers once a week had a mean score of 2.6506 and standard error of 1.72368. The 1,644 respondents who rarely had access to Newspapers had a mean score of 2.2974 and standard error of 1.56956.

### Research Hypothesis Two

Ho2: Exposure to television will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media.

Tables 3: Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Access to Television on Political Knowledge

Television	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Difference	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	3378	2.6566	1.69809	.02922	.21778	4226	3.381	.001
No	850	2.4388	1.59775	.05480				

The results in Table 4.43 showed that there was a significant influence of access to television on respondents' political knowledge ( $t_{4226} = 3.381$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Respondents who had access to television had greater political knowledge than those without access to television. The hypothesis which postulated that exposure to television will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media was by this finding rejected.

Tables 5: Descriptive Statistics of the influence of the Frequency of Access to Television on Knowledge of Political Issues

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Everyday	2040	2.7255	1.67728	.03714	2.6527	2.7983	.00	7.00
Thrice a week	600	2.8017	1.75807	.07177	2.6607	2.9426	.00	7.00
Twice a week	241	2.6805	1.79165	.11541	2.4532	2.9078	.00	7.00
Once a week	218	2.6514	1.70051	.11517	2.4244	2.8784	.00	7.00
Rarely	1129	2.2870	1.57074	.04675	2.1953	2.3787	.00	7.00
Total	4228	2.6128	1.68049	.02584	2.5622	2.6635	.00	7.00

The results in Table 5 revealed that the 2,040 respondents who had access to television everyday had a mean score of 2.7255 and standard error of 1.67728. The 600 respondents who had access to television thrice a week had a mean score of 2.8017 and standard error of 1.75807. Whereas the 241 respondents who had access to television twice a week had a mean score of 2.6805 and standard error of 1.79165, those 218 respondents who had access to television once a week had a mean score of 2.6514 and standard error of 1.70051. The 1,129 respondents who rarely had access to television had a mean score of 2.2870 and standard error of 1.57074.

### Research Hypothesis Three

Ho3: Exposure to radio will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media.

Tables 6 : Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Access to Radio on Political Knowledge

Radio	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Difference	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	3274	2.6924	1.68849	.02951	.35280	4226	5.728	.000
No	954	2.3396	1.62418	.05258				

The results in Table 4.52 showed that there was a significant influence of access to radio on respondents' political knowledge ( $t_{4226} = 5.728$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Respondents who had access to radio had greater political knowledge than those without access to radio. The hypothesis which postulated that exposure to radio will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media was by this finding rejected.



Tables 6: Descriptive Statistics of the influence of the Frequency of Access to Radio on Knowledge of Political Issues

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Everyday	1871	2.9850	1.74919	.04044	2.9057	3.0643	.00	7.00
Thrice a week	488	2.6496	1.61301	.07302	2.5061	2.7931	.00	6.00
Twice a week	293	2.2935	1.40542	.08211	2.1319	2.4551	.00	7.00
Once a week	273	2.3773	1.50750	.09124	2.1977	2.5569	.00	7.00
Rarely	1303	2.1857	1.57043	.04351	2.1004	2.2711	.00	7.00
Total	4228	2.6128	1.68049	.02584	2.5622	2.6635	.00	7.00

The results in Table 6 revealed that the 1,871 respondents who have access to radio everyday had a mean score of 2.9850 and standard error of 1.74919. The 488 respondents who have access to radio thrice a week had a mean score of 2.6496 and standard error of 1.61301. Whereas the 293 respondents who have access to radio twice a week had a mean score of 2.2935 and standard error of 1.40542, those 273 respondents who have access to radio once a week had a mean score of 2.3773 and standard error of 1.50750. The 1,303 respondents who rarely have access to radio had a mean score of 2.1857 and standard error of 1.57043.

#### Research Hypothesis Four

Exposure to weekly magazines will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media.

Tables 7: Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Access to Weekly Magazine on Political Knowledge

Magazine	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Difference	Df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	2452	2.5408	1.64431	.03321	-.17149	4226	-3.279	.001
No	1776	2.7123	1.72471	.04093				

The results in Table 7 showed that there was a significant influence of access to weekly magazines on respondents' political knowledge ( $t_{4226} = 3.279$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Respondents who had access to weekly magazines had greater political knowledge than those without access to Newspaper. The hypothesis which postulated that exposure to weekly magazines will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media was by this finding rejected.

Tables 8: Descriptive Statistics of the influence of the Frequency of Access to Weekly Magazine on Knowledge of Political Issues

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Everyday	534	2.5899	1.64778	.07131	2.4498	2.7300	.00	7.00
Thrice a week	263	2.6198	1.74520	.10761	2.4079	2.8317	.00	6.00
Twice a week	303	3.0033	1.89719	.10899	2.7888	3.2178	.00	7.00
Once a week	616	2.6461	1.71215	.06898	2.5106	2.7816	.00	7.00
Rarely	2512	2.5617	1.63937	.03271	2.4976	2.6258	.00	7.00
Total	4228	2.6128	1.68049	.02584	2.5622	2.6635	.00	7.00

The results in Table 8 revealed that the 534 respondents who had access to weekly magazine everyday had a mean score of 2.5899 and standard error of 1.64778. The 263 respondents who had access to weekly magazine

thrice a week had a mean score of 2.6198 and standard error of 1.74520. Whereas the 303 respondents who had access to weekly magazine twice a week had a mean score of 3.0033 and standard error of 1.89719, those 616 respondents who had access to weekly magazine once a week had a mean score of 2.6461 and standard error of 1.71215. The 2,512 respondents who rarely had access to weekly magazine had a mean score of 2.5617 and standard error of 1.63937.

### Research Hypothesis Five

Exposure to the Internet will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media.

Tables 9: Independent t-test Analysis of Influence of Access to the Internet on Political Knowledge

Internet	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Difference	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	3191	2.5525	1.66703	.02951	-.24597	4226	-4.102	.000
No	1037	2.7985	1.70873	.05306				

The results in Table 9 showed that there was a significant influence of access to the Internet on respondents' political knowledge ( $t_{4226} = 4.102$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Respondents who had access to the Internet had greater political knowledge than those without access to the Internet. The hypothesis which postulated that exposure to the Internet will not lead to greater political knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates than other media was by this finding rejected.

Tables 9: Descriptive Statistics of the influence of the Frequency of Access to the Internet on Knowledge of Political Issues

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Everyday	1723	2.4051	1.58081	.03808	2.3304	2.4798	.00	7.00
Thrice a week	653	2.7749	1.81756	.07113	2.6352	2.9146	.00	7.00
Twice a week	391	3.0588	1.80714	.09139	2.8791	3.2385	.00	7.00
Once a week	441	2.6168	1.60697	.07652	2.4664	2.7672	.00	7.00
Rarely	1020	2.6873	1.68560	.05278	2.5837	2.7908	.00	7.00
Total	4228	2.6128	1.68049	.02584	2.5622	2.6635	.00	7.00

The results in Table 9 revealed that the 1,723 respondents who had access to the Internet everyday had a mean score of 2.4051 and standard error of 1.58081. The 653 respondents who had access to the Internet thrice a week had a mean score of 2.7749 and standard error of 1.81756. Whereas the 391 respondents who had access to the Internet twice a week had a mean score of 3.0588 and standard error of 1.80714, those 441 respondents who had access to the Internet once a week had a mean score of 2.6168 and standard error of 1.6168. The 1,020 respondents who rarely had access to the Internet had a mean score of 2.6873 and standard error of 1.68560.

### Discussion of findings

The t-test analysis of the influence of Exposure to Media on Political Behaviour helped to measure the relationship between the two variables in contact in the hypotheses. Items 26 – 29 of the Research Instrument were designed to capture the embedded indices of the respondents' political behaviour. This included their attitude to political and campaign issues, before the election and how information, news or programmes watched on many of the media affected their decisions. Other indices of respondents' political participation as captured in the research instrument included the frequency of their engagement in political discussion with friends, participation in rallies, voters' registration exercise, campaigns and actual voting in elections. These were the inputs that were correlated with the respondents' exposure to the telephone and the print media.

The significant difference in the political behaviour of respondents occasioned by their exposure to either of the print and electronic as revealed by these hypotheses showed some degrees of consistency with the earlier findings of the research questions. Television, for instance, has been found not only as the most preferred source of information but has consistently demonstrated its predisposing influence on most of the respondents' political



knowledge. This fact seems to corroborate some earlier findings by Sobowale (2010) and Aririguzor (2009). As far back as 1982, Gerbner et al have revealed in several studies that heavy television viewing is correlated to several real world perceptions.

The combined impact of television, radio and the Internet could have accounted for the seemingly diminishing influence of the print media on respondents' political behaviour. Aarts and Semetko (2003: op cit) seem to have captured this fact when they observed that political interest, discussion, and ideological sophistication have increased over the past few decades in a number of countries, adding that this trend is associated with the rise of the media and the educative role of television in particular. Another major revelation of this study is that young voters appear generally to be more receptive to negative and strategic framing in the news than older voters. Citing Jennings and Niemi (1978,1981), Elenbaas and de Vreese had posited that young people have less stable and more discontinuous political orientations than those with higher age, more experience, and more sophistication in politics. As a primary source of political information therefore, the media, Elenbaas and de Vreese (p. 553) contend are likely to exert a significant influence on young adults' still developing understanding of, and relatively uncrystallized attitudes toward politics and political processes. From this perspective, it would appear that young voters are most vulnerable to being caught in spiral of cynicism and apathy when exposed to strategy coverage of political affairs as these findings revealed.

### Conclusion

This paper examined the basic nexus between the key variables of media access or exposure and the political knowledge of undergraduates in Nigeria. Undergraduates constitute a critical segment of youth population in any society. The study has once again lent credence to the link between media exposure and the knowledge of political issues by undergraduates. In other words, respondents' media preference accounted for their political awareness and knowledge of political issues, in spite of the fact that respondents' performance in the knowledge-based items in the questionnaire was generally poor. Although television had the greatest influence on the political knowledge and behaviour of the respondents, there was a significant difference in the political behaviour of undergraduates exposed to the electronic media against those exposed to the print media. This implied that exposure and attention to the electronic media (i.e Radio, Television and the Internet) predicted higher political behaviour among respondents than those of the print media.

The research findings are consistent with the discoveries and observations of some earlier studies conducted by communication scholars like Nwuneli et al (1993), Aarts and Semetko (2003), Stroud (2007), Aririguzor (2009) and Sobowale (2010). The study findings however contrasted with those of Feldman and Kawakami (1991) and Hayes (2009). Feldman and Kawakami had, for instance, in their study of Japanese undergraduates discovered that attention and exposure to the print media, more than television were the strongest predictors of political knowledge, behaviour and interest while Hayes had concluded in his study of the American elections that some concerns about TV's effects on political judgment are exaggerated.

Based on these findings it is therefore suggested that since undergraduates constitute a crucial portion of youths and the voting population, deliberate policies must be initiated to increase their access to the mass media. While it is instructive and salutary that the miniaturisation of technology and media convergence liberalised access to the electronic media, especially the Internet, a lot still needs to be done by government and other regulatory bodies to provide the requisite infrastructure to make these services available, as well as address the rising costs of phones, computers, I-pad, Android, Tablets, etc. to make these devices more accessible to this class of Nigerians.

Also because the mass media generally are products of technology, a crucial requirement for their effective functioning and operations which could, in turn, reduce costs and enhance access / exposure is electricity. Government needs to address the electricity problem across the country. University campuses need to regain their lost glories as research incubators with stable power supply that could keep staff and students abreast of global developments in the information age.

Besides, newspapers proprietors should design ways of further reducing the cover prices of newspapers and magazines on campuses. Besides, university authorities should widen up the outlets through which students could have access and exposure to newspapers and magazines on a regular basis. To this end, regular supply of newspapers and magazines should be made available in students' common rooms, butteries, libraries, departmental offices including halls of residence. The diminishing preference of students for the print media as sources of political information could be a reflection of the often alleged declining reading culture.

Finally, Broadcast journalists need to align their programmes with the reality of the unfolding global democratic order. The on-going trend of mass entertainment and commercialism at the expense of Public Service Broadcasting, value-added news, issue-based analyses and current affairs programmes etc deserves a review in order to increase the political knowledge of the audience.

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